

Sisters of Charity
Foundation



Annual Review
2024–2025

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and express gratitude that we can all share this land today. We share the sorrow for the costs of that sharing, and hope and believe that we can move together to a place of equity, justice, and partnership.



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Your compassion and generosity have been the driving force behind every meal shared, every safe bed offered, and every dream rekindled.



Thank you.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for being the heroes our communities so urgently need.

Because of you, families facing hunger have received food and nourishment, and children who might have gone without have been able to eat, grow and thrive. You helped people escaping domestic violence, providing them with emergency support when they needed safety most. You opened doors to shelter for those experiencing homelessness, and through casework support, helped them find their way back to stable housing and a sense of security.

Your kindness has also reached young people who might otherwise have been left behind. Students without parental support have been given the chance to pursue education at university or TAFE – opportunities that will shape brighter, stronger futures.

Chair and CEO's Report

In 2025, we proudly celebrate our 25th anniversary. For a quarter of a century, we have been able to extend compassion and create opportunities because of our dedicated supporters, and the Sisters of Charity Congregation.

This year, your support has been needed more than ever. The spiralling cost of living and the shortage of affordable housing have meant that more people than ever before are reaching out for help. We have heard devastating stories from our partner charities about the precarious state people are in. In response, we doubled the funding available through the Community Grants Program, distributing \$1,183,345 to support 83 nonprofits, and increasing the maximum grant size to \$20,000.

This year, we proudly celebrated the graduation of six Tertiary Scholarship Program recipients – Aaliyah, Cleo, Ruby, Ty, Tyrah and Zarah – bringing our total number of graduates to 32. We are proud of all our students, whose perseverance, talent and achievements remind us why making these opportunities possible is so important.

The Sisters of Charity themselves remain at the heart of our mission. Sister Christine Henry in Queensland and Sister Anne Mayberry in New South Wales have continued ministering to regional, remote and rural communities impacted by catastrophic weather events and economic hardship. Their compassionate presence ensures that country people – many still living with the long-term effects of bushfires, flooding and drought – receive personal and tailored support to maintain their wellbeing and resilience.

Five years on from the launch of our Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program, developed with The Salvation Army, we are encouraged to see 12 survivors successfully complete the program and achieve independence. Together, our organisations are also working to raise greater awareness of the many forms of modern slavery present in Australia.

This past financial year also saw us commit significant funding to safe and stable housing. We signed new three-year agreements with the Asylum Seekers Centre, the House of Welcome, and Women's Community Shelters. In addition to shelter, these organisations deliver casework and wraparound support that helps their clients take steps towards stability and independence.

We also take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to new Board Director, Suzie Boulous, whose insight will strengthen the Foundation into the future. We also farewell Sister Margaret Valentine. Her expertise, particularly in our grants and scholarship committees, has been invaluable.

As we reflect on 25 years of service and look to the future, we offer our deepest thanks to all our supporters. Your faith in our mission, your compassion, and your generosity make everything possible. Together, we will continue to provide hope and dignity to those who need it most.



Juliet Dunworth
Chair




Louise M Burton
CEO



2024–2025 Impact



Community Grants Program

We distributed **\$1,183,345** in grant funding to **83** charities this year, bringing our total to more than **\$12,273,345** given to **1,177+** community projects since 2000.

Tertiary Scholarship Program

32 scholarship recipients have graduated with a university degree or TAFE diploma since 2012, while a further **32** were enrolled at institutions across Australia this year.



Community Care: Downs & West Community Support

This year **\$66,902** was provided in financial support, and **\$66,143** worth of in-kind donations were collected and distributed to country Queenslanders by Sister Christine Henry and her team.



Community Care: Remote and Rural

Sister Anne Mayberry drove **7,978** kilometres through country New South Wales this year, providing **\$40,880** in financial support, plus additional material aid, to **19** schools and organisations.

Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program

6 survivors received **3,452** hours of casework support this year, while **12** survivors have completed the program to achieve independence since 2020.



Asylum Seekers Support Program

68 people were supported with emergency/crisis accommodation and **65** people received financial assistance to maintain their housing, while **57** adults and **27** children were accommodated every night across **17** properties.



The Sisters of Charity of Australia Congregational Council. From left: Sr Adele Cottrell-Dormer rsc, Sr Tess Marcelo rsc, Congregational Leader Sr Laureen Dixon rsc, Sr Libbey Byrne rsc and Sr Margaret Guy rsc.

“

“These shelters offer more than just a bed for the night – they’re a fresh start, a space where women can regain confidence, feel safe, and begin to rebuild their lives.”

From the Sisters

It is good to stand still and appreciate the past, relish the present, and look forward to the future in hope.

For several years, our Congregation has had a commitment to serving and supporting those who have experienced or are experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV). As you know, this is a sad and growing epidemic in our society.

Every night, 54,000 women across Australia experience homelessness, with DFV as the leading cause. The vast majority of these women have children in their care. More than one in two women who seek a bed in a crisis shelter are still turned away every night, mostly due to lack of space.

We are particularly grateful that, during the past year, the Foundation has made a three-year funding commitment to

Women’s Community Shelters (WCS) dedicated to creating more crisis accommodation, support programs, and housing pathways to independence for women and children experiencing DFV.

This is a wonderful organisation that works hand-in-hand with local communities to create safe, welcoming places where women can turn when they have nowhere else to go. Finding a way forward takes more than housing alone, which is why WCS makes sure women have access to the right support – whether it’s counselling, health care, legal advice, education, or job opportunities – so they can take back control and look forward to a brighter future.

Our Congregation, too, made a donation to WCS and we are pleased that the service is being provided in the Liverpool LGA – a place close to our heart, as so many of our Sisters have ministered there. A four-bedroom home in

Casula has been given a whole new purpose: transformed into a crisis shelter in an area where the need is especially high. Thanks to the hard work of volunteers, the house underwent deep cleaning, garden and property works, and the addition of brand-new white goods. At capacity the new shelter will provide a safe place for up to four more families every night of the year.

We look forward in hope as all our partner charities continue to provide physical and emotional support, comfort and practical assistance to so many in our society.

Laureen Dixon rsc

Laureen Dixon rsc
Congregational Leader

A Place to Rest

Each winter, Community Grant recipient Stable One’s Yarra Valley Winter Shelter provides overnight crisis accommodation for up to 30 people experiencing homelessness.

“How did I get here? It’s amazing how life can change overnight. A few turns of events, Fate can deal you a hand that brings your world crashing down around you. I found myself homeless at the age of 58 for the first time in my life.

After sleeping on the streets for a few nights, I was sure that I would succumb to illness. I was so out of my element, not knowing what the cold nights had in store for me.”

“This gentleman’s story was that he was renting a room from a couple and was suddenly told that a family member needed to move in and that he needed to move out,” explains Stable One CEO Katherine Kirkwood. “No warning, no notice, and suddenly he found himself homeless. When he arrived at the shelter he was tired, withdrawn and sat and cried on his bed. Throughout his stay he changed into a different person.”

“From being in a situation I thought there was no escape from came my saving grace... Stable One and the hundreds of volunteers, staff and coordinators who have gone above and beyond to keep us all sheltered through the depths of winter, keep us fed with warm nutritious meals, and give us a cosy environment to spend our evenings.

While staying in the winter program for the last nine nights, I’ve been privileged to meet some amazing people. We all have a story to tell. No matter what the circumstances or paths we have taken, the journey to homelessness has led us to the same place.

I feel like I’m home, sitting around the living area with new-found friends. The volunteers do an amazing job making us feel welcome and safe.

Stable One has kept doors open that would otherwise have closed behind me, giving me opportunities that would be lost without the support of this amazing program. Being well-groomed and looking healthy is something that is paramount to finding accommodation or employment.

I am confident that Stable One has been an essential stepping stone in my journey to a fruitful and stable future.

To all the coordinators, volunteers, cooks, drivers and an army of behind-the-scenes staff: a heartfelt thank you, you all have gone out of your way to keep me safe and optimistic that I will have a long and healthy life. God Bless you all.”

“We were the ‘bridge’ that enabled him to be safe, find hope, care for himself and be supported – our Welfare Coordinator was able to assist with rental applications – in finding housing,” says Katherine. “Happily he has now found a place to live, through connections made at the shelter. We have provided him with a housewarming gift this week. As you can see, he is very thankful.”

The Yarra Valley Winter Shelter

In partnership with seven local churches, the shelter runs nightly with the support of around 150 volunteers who offer meals, warm beds, and a sense of community. The shelter exists to create a place of rest, care and connection, helping guests feel less alone and more supported. The Welfare Coordinator assists guests facing complex challenges like trauma, mental health, and housing barriers, and helps them take real steps toward a brighter future.





Community Grants Program

Providing grants of up to \$20,000 to community organisations that support people experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation.

Over the past year, we introduced several important changes to our grants program to better meet the needs of charities and the communities they serve.

We streamlined the program by moving from two grant rounds to one. Applications now open in July, with funds distributed in December – timed to support charities as they plan for the year ahead.

Recognising the growing pressures of the cost-of-living crisis, we increased the maximum grant amount from \$15,000 to \$20,000. This ensures charities have greater capacity to deliver their programs at a time

when both operating costs and community need are rising.

Most significantly, we have doubled the total funding available through our program. \$1,183,345 was distributed in grant funding over the past financial year, compared to \$599,980 in the prior period. This decision was made in direct response to the urgent challenges of housing stress and financial hardship across Australia. By expanding our support, we aim to help more organisations provide vital services to those who need them most.

A better life for kids in care

A Better Life for Foster Kids used its \$14,000 grant to allow children in out-of-home care to participate in activities or experiences that enhance their wellbeing.

Children in care are three times more likely to experience mental health issues compared to their peers. Participation in recreational activities can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety by up to 30%, while also improving social skills and resilience. One young man who benefited from the program said:

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for donating a pair of new football boots to me. It honestly means so much more than I can explain.

Being out on the field makes me feel strong, confident, and like I can achieve anything. But sometimes, not having the right gear made it harder for me to play my best – or even feel like I belonged on the team. Your gift has changed that.

With proper boots, I can run faster, play safer, and train harder without worrying about sore feet or slipping. Now I feel more ready, more fearless, and even more excited to show up to every game and give it everything I've got.

You didn't just give me equipment – you gave me a boost of confidence and a reason to keep chasing my goals. Thank you for believing in young athletes like me. I hope one day I can do something just as kind for someone else."

Carers can request funding for sporting fees, tutoring, educational materials, mental or physical health assessments, or urgent material aid.

Program Highlights

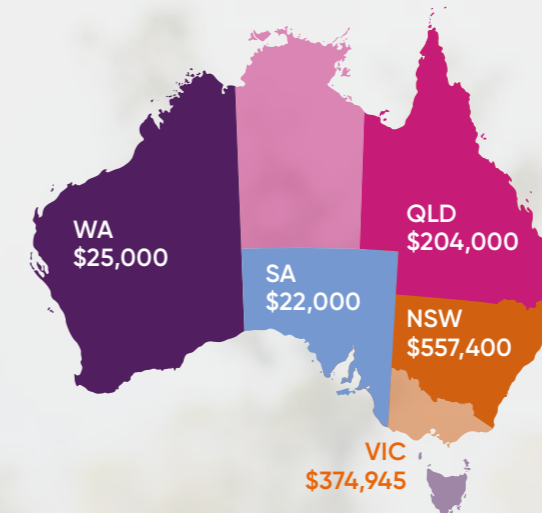
159 organisations applied for funding

83 organisations received a Community Grant

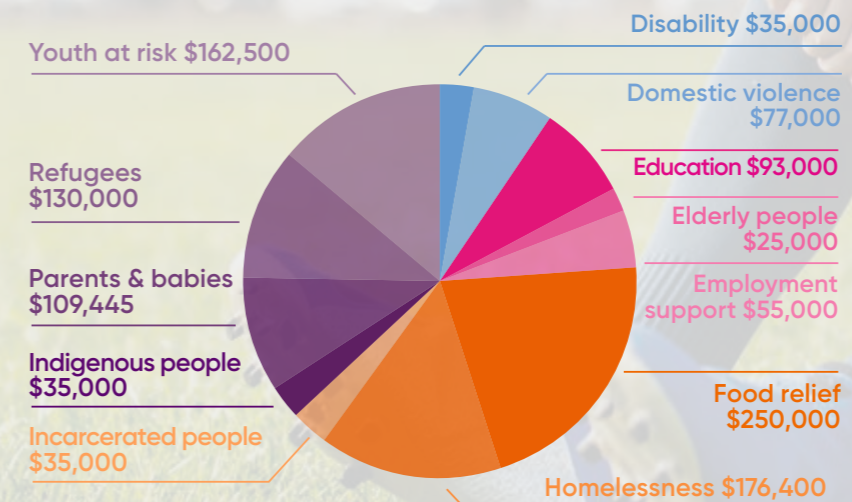
\$1,183,345 given in grant funding

\$580,900 given to programs that promote positive mental health

GRANTS ACROSS AUSTRALIA



GRANTS BY CATEGORY



\$12,273,345+ GIVEN TO 1,177+ COMMUNITY PROJECTS SINCE 2000



Tertiary Scholarship Program

Helping young people from out-of-home care backgrounds transform their lives through tertiary education.

Though we are honoured to play our part, what's needed to truly make an impact on the number of young people from out-of-home care who go on to tertiary study is increased financial support for the cohort across every state and territory.

We are so proud of our students who are working towards this goal through advocacy, which they prioritise despite a full schedule of classes, study and work. To name just a few: Teresa is a lived experience advocate at the NSW Department of Communities and Justice; Ruby is a youth advocate for the Commission for Children and Young People, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the Create Foundation; Julia engages in public discourse around social housing; and Owen seeks to support incarcerated young men as they reintegrate into society.

The program has grown year-on-year, with more applications submitted and scholarships awarded every February. We have only been able to face the increased demand because of the generosity of our supporters, and additional help from the Waratah Education Foundation, the Jaramas Foundation, and The Snow Foundation, for which we are very grateful.

Tahleah

Tahleah is in her final year of a Bachelor of Education at the University of Notre Dame, Fremantle.



"Last year I was fortunate enough to complete a 10-week teaching placement in England, at a school right next to a castle, which was a bit surreal! After that, I began a semester abroad in the USA at the University of Portland.

I'll be completing my final 10-week placement back home in Fitzroy Crossing, the town I grew up in. I'm really looking forward to being surrounded by family as I wrap up this important chapter in my journey.

I'm also incredibly honoured that I've been selected as one of only three students to attend the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education in New Zealand following my placement. It's such a privilege, and I'm beyond excited for this opportunity. I was also invited to speak at the National NAIDOC Forum in Perth, another moment I will never forget.

As I reflect on how far I've come, I truly want to thank you for your unwavering support through the scholarship. Your belief in me has meant the world."



Owen

Owen is studying a Bachelor of Animal and Veterinary Bioscience at the University of Sydney.

"I remember I was riding the train home. When I saw the email that said I got the scholarship I started crying. It was a busy train!

What you're giving is not just funding, it's dignity. I feel that someone cares, someone supports me, someone is willing to look after me.

Dignity says that we are human, not just a case number. Out-of-home care kids have a case file: a booklet of notes, papers, documents. Caseworkers open this up to see our age, mental health issues, living experience – three months here, two months there, one week in this place, one month in that place – different locations because we're just getting transported. Not like a human, like a hot potato. And when we grow up, turn 18 or 21, we'll go back into society and they expect us to survive.

I've been through all these things that have kept me down. I haven't seen my mum for 13 years. I've seen people dying. I see things lost. I was once in the street with nothing, and I am here today.

I see a vision of myself – I'm going to live, I'm going to have a family, just like everyone has. I'm going to have my little dogs with me. I'm going to help people.

Resilience is the most important quality that I have. No matter what happened to you, stay alive. Think about the vision that you have for your future. Keep going. We're going places."

Zarah

Zarah recently received her Diploma of Visual Arts from TAFE Meadowbank.



"In my course I developed connections with people who shared my love of art and creative expression. It truly felt like a community of likeminded individuals coming together to support each other's artistic growth.

When I received my diploma, I felt a sense of pride and accomplishment. Throughout my life I always struggled with feeling like I wasn't good enough, but this achievement proved to me that I am capable of so much more than I let myself believe. I was finally able to see my own potential and have confidence in my abilities. When I held my diploma in my hands, it was like holding a physical representation of how far I had come.

I want to be able to do more creative courses to expand my abilities. I've begun looking into doing more extensive painting courses, as well as interior design, and possibly makeup and nail art courses, as I am interested in expanding my knowledge on all types of creative skills.

I'm not fully sure what type of career path I want to pursue yet. I do know that art therapy is something that I feel passionate about and could be a good fit for me, but I also have an interest in creating and selling my own art. I am open to whatever opportunities come my way.

Some personal highlights in my life have been being able to rent a house with my fiancé, who I have been with for four years and have been slowly planning our wedding with, as well as being able to take trips around Australia with him and his family."

Program Highlights

6 STUDENTS GRADUATED in 2024–2025



32 STUDENTS HAVE GRADUATED with a university degree, TAFE diploma or equivalent since 2012



10 STUDENTS AWARDED NEW SCHOLARSHIPS for university and TAFE courses this year



CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S GRADUATES!

Aaliyah
Cert IV Veterinary Nursing
TAFE The Gordon

Cleo
Bachelor of Media and Communications
University of Notre Dame

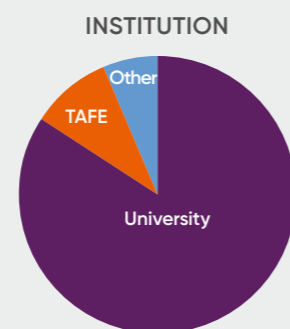
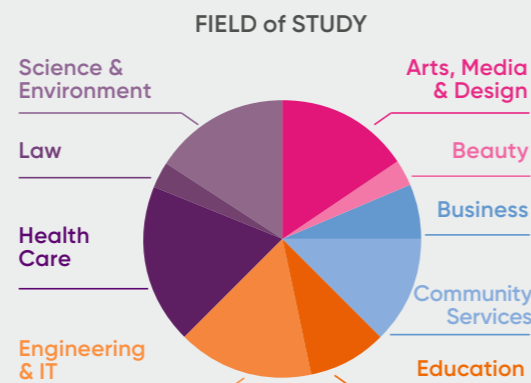
Ruby
Bachelor of Communication
Deakin University

Ty
Cert III Light Vehicle Mechanics
TAFE Ultimo

Tyrah
Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)
UNSW

Zarah
Diploma of Visual Arts
TAFE Meadowbank

OUR 32 ENROLLED STUDENTS



Congratulations Ruby!

Scholarship recipient Ruby graduated with a Bachelor of Communication from Deakin University in June, and was selected to give the student response speech on behalf of her graduating class.

"Today marks a celebration. A celebration of more than just academic success, but rather a showcase of our personal growth and resilience we have all developed along the way.

As students, we're expected to have some idea of what we want to do in life. Whether that is teaching, directing film and television, creative writing, or journalism. There are an endless number of possibilities.

But I've come to realise that university isn't just about assignments, group projects, or looming deadlines. It's about discovering who we are when we're tested. When we're tired. And when we're determined not to give up.

What I've learned through my time at Deakin goes beyond textbooks and lecture slides. I've learnt to be kinder to myself, to play to my strengths, and to grow. Not just as a student, but as a person.

I think one thing many of us have learnt is to believe in ourselves. To trust that we have the strength to keep going, to face challenges head-on, and to know that we can achieve whatever we put our minds to. These aren't just academic lessons, but life lessons that will stay with us as we step forward into the next chapter of our lives as university graduates.

When I was 17 years old after leaving out-of-home care, I was told my education didn't matter because I dropped out of mainstream school. That moment stayed with me. Not as a defeat. But as a reason to push forward.

And today, six years later... I stand before you, giving the student response. And that, to me, is proof. Proof that our stories are never defined by where they start. They're defined by what we choose to do next.

What I'm trying to say is that it doesn't matter where you've come from. How your journey started. How many late-night study sessions you endured. Or how many moments of doubt you faced. What matters is that today – this very moment – you're able to stand proudly and say: I did that.

I also know that if it weren't for the unwavering support from those around me, none of this would be possible.

So, on behalf of myself and every graduate here today, I want to thank everyone who has supported us along the way. Through encouragement, patience, guidance, or simply being there when we needed it. You have been our rocks, and we are forever grateful."



Celebrating our Students

In late 2024 we held an event to celebrate the achievements of our scholarship students. We are immensely proud of everything they have accomplished.

Past and current scholarship recipients had the opportunity to connect with their peers, while also sharing their challenges and triumphs with Foundation supporters at an event generously hosted by Thomson Geer. This is the largest gathering of students and graduates we have had since the program launched in 2012.



Andre (right) is about to finish his Bachelor of Engineering (Honours), while Giovany began the same degree in 2024.



Left to right: Foundation CEO Louise M Burton, Bachelor of Nursing graduate Danny, Program Development Manager Estelle Muller, and Teresa, who is studying a combined Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) and Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice.



Left to right: Nga Kim is completing her Masters in a Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching), Tasha graduated with a Bachelor of Health (Paramedicine) in 2020, and Cleo recently graduated with a Bachelor of Media and Communications.



Sisters of Charity Foundation Board Members Sister Margaret Valentine rsc (left) and Sister Suzette Clark rsc (right) with Andre's grandmother and biggest supporter, Kay.



Left to right: Diploma of Visual Arts graduate Zarah, Danny, Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) graduate Tyrrah, Nga Kim, Cleo, Teresa, Tasha, Andre, Bachelor of Animal and Veterinary Bioscience student Owen, Giovany.



Downs & West Community Support

Led by Sister Christine Henry rsc, DWCS provides support to farming families and their communities in rural southern Queensland who are severely affected by climatic conditions or family matters beyond their control.

The past year has brought significant challenges to the communities served by DWCS across the Western and Southern Downs regions. A series of natural disasters, including flooding and bushfires, have deeply affected families and individuals, compounding existing hardships. These events have placed additional pressure on already strained resources and have contributed to a growing concern around mental health, which continues to be a major issue in rural and remote areas.

DWCS provided groceries, essential household items, warm clothing, and help with overdue bills for medical care, utilities and insurance. Families received petrol and grocery vouchers, car repairs, and support with living expenses when forced to be away from home. On farms, aid covered veterinary and stock feed bills, council rates, vehicle registration, and the replacement of vital equipment and infrastructure lost to

floods and bushfires. DWCS ensured access to children's school supplies, bedroom essentials, and support during hospital stays in the city. In times of acute financial crisis, immediate emergency relief was delivered through direct payments, helping families regain stability and peace of mind.

Volunteer assistance has been invaluable. Volunteers collect and sort donations, attend working bees, wrap gifts, pack hampers, create beautiful craft items for fundraising sales, price items and serve at fundraising stalls.

Although Sr Christine faced serious health challenges this year and was unable to travel as much as usual, she worked tirelessly in the background organising the collection and delivery of donated and essential items, and stayed connected with people by offering pastoral care and support via telephone, letter-writing and visits.



Sr Christine and Prince Harry packing the van with blankets, doonas, sheets and towels.



Christmas dinner for country women.



Purchasing Christmas hams as gifts for families.



Sister of Charity Dr. Karan Varker wrapping gifts and pricing for a fundraising craft stall.



This year's highlights

\$66,902

provided in community support payments

\$66,143

worth of in-kind donations collected and distributed

145

women attended 6 Wellness Through Learning and Creativity Days

320+

people attended 3 Christmas events

1,245

hours of work provided by volunteers



Swept away

The 2025 Queensland floods displaced more than 15,000 people, caused at least 18 fatalities, and resulted in \$1.5 billion in damages.

Thousands of hectares of agricultural land were affected, with significant livestock losses across the region. Wildlife didn't have a chance of survival.

"We are terribly upset about stock losses and quite emotional about what the cattle have been through – weaners and calves and mothers," said one farmer. "It was very frightening, especially for the children. It will take a long time to rebuild, restock, and relax."

DWCS volunteers organised delivery of goods via other transport services as roads were closed.

"The resilience of the people has been an inspiration, but they still need our help," says Sr Christine.



Remote and Rural

The Remote and Rural ministry is led by Sister Anne Mayberry rsc, and provides support to families in remote, rural and regional New South Wales who have been badly affected by droughts, bushfires, floods and general economic downturn.

The past year has been particularly challenging for regional and farming communities in New South Wales, with rising living costs, the rental crisis, and catastrophic weather events compounding hardship. Once again Sister Anne has dedicated herself to travelling across the state to support schools, charities and aged care homes, providing both practical assistance and hope.

Her efforts have taken many forms. At schools, she has provided clothing and monetary gifts so that students can take part in simple joys like mufti days. On several occasions, she drove all the way to the SPC factory in Shepparton, filling her Rav-4 with groceries for just \$350 – stretching every dollar to make the most difference. Families in Tumbarumba, still struggling in the aftermath of the 2020 bushfires, received much-needed grocery hampers, while students at St Patrick’s Cessnock were gifted toys, sports equipment, and a \$3,000 donation. “A number of children at the school are in need of medical attention and have to travel long distances for appointments,” Sister Anne explains.

Her generosity reached Eugowra, a town still recovering from devastating floods. “The principal at St Joseph’s Eugowra was overwhelmed with our donation of \$3,000, as the situation in town is still far from recovered,” she says. “Abandoned homes are still very evident.”

Sister Anne also coordinates donations from friends and volunteers who knit and crochet rugs, beanies and baby clothes for the ministry, and help with purchasing and packing grocery hampers for struggling families.



Bales of silage pushed up against fences by floodwaters along the road to Taree.



Clothes and toys for kids in Cessnock.



This year’s highlights



7,978

kilometres travelled through country NSW

19

schools, charities and ministries assisted

\$40,880

provided in cheques, groceries, school supplies and other essentials to families experiencing disadvantage

Tareebit – Fig tree by the river

The mighty Manning river forms a fringe alongside the flat land skirting the township of Taree.

Come May '25 – the town is knee deep in muddy water. A month’s rain in two days. Destruction abounds.

Heartache, loss and despair. Hope and promise seem unattainable, as with the moving water and imagery days swirl into weeks and months.

The narrowness of Martin Bridge a stark contrast to the river’s span. Dried grass adorns the fence wires indicative of the water’s height.

Mounds of household possessions, once such treasured items now furnish footpaths and muddied fields.

Trestle tables deck the church grounds. Offering nourishment, promise and a smile to those despairing of hope.

A quietness envelops the town.

Further along Highway 1 bales of lost silage flank broken fences.

Testament to the water’s strength.

Farmers forced to watch as cattle and stock are subjected to the water’s force.

Fallen trees mingle with bales of hay, both unleashed and misplaced. Hay the tiresome work of farmer and kin.

We listen. We observe. We endeavour to help and support our country folk.

Written by Sister Anne Mayberry. ‘Tareebit’ is a local native Biripi word meaning tree by the river; more specifically, the Sandpaper Fig (Ficus coronata).



Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program

Providing transitional housing and casework support to survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking, together with The Salvation Army.

The Modern Slavery Transitional Housing Program (MSTHP) provides opportunities for survivors who are ready to be independent to access stable, long-term housing.

The Foundation provides funding for The Salvation Army to employ a caseworker, who helps survivors secure an independent living situation and educates them on their rights and responsibilities as a tenant. Because of the cost of renting in Sydney, accommodation options available through the program have been expanded from private rentals to also include share housing, social housing and other low-cost options.

Foundation funding also allows program participants to furnish their new homes, and covers a significant portion of their rent for up to 12 months. The caseworker continues to support them as they work towards their individual goals or face unforeseen challenges – whether those be studying or training, employment, visa issues, health, budgeting, etc.

The MSTHP caseworker is part of The Salvation Army's Trafficking and Slavery Safe House team, and therefore familiar to the majority of survivors in the program. Over the past year, the team has focused on raising awareness about the program within the modern slavery service provision sector, so other charities and organisations can refer survivors who need support as they journey toward independence.

A new beginning

Handa* is a resilient young woman from a Middle Eastern refugee background who relocated to Sydney from rural Australia after leaving a forced marriage.

Handa's home country was not safe due to ongoing war and mass killings by a terrorist group. She did not feel safe outside her home, but inside her home was no better. She experienced a lot of violence, especially as her mother tried to force her to marry when she was 14. Despite her father being supportive and helping her stay in school, Handa experienced a lot of physical, verbal and emotional abuse from her mother.

After Handa's father passed away, it became easier for her mother to force her into marriage. After she came to Australia, she knew she was in a safer place where she could ask for help.

After escaping her marriage and arriving in Sydney, Handa spent six months living in The Salvation Army's Trafficking and Slavery Safe House, then joined the MSTHP for extra support on her journey to independence. She says:

"When I first moved to Sydney and stayed at the safe house, I never thought I could live alone. It felt too hard. I was scared, especially at night. But over time, living in my own space with support gave me the courage and energy to try.

Last year, I was studying two days a week at TAFE and working two jobs casually, sometimes even night shifts. I didn't feel fully ready to pay full rent on my own, but I had some savings. This help through the MSTHP gave me a lot of support and energy to be able to complete my study, work, and rebuild my life in general.

I found the studio apartment on my own and Salvos Housing helped me with the application. Then, I signed a lease directly with Salvos Housing.

Having my own space made me feel strong and independent. I could make my own rules, have my own

privacy, and live how I wanted. I could invite friends over, cook, and just be myself.

It was the first time I lived alone. At the beginning, I was scared – especially of being in the dark. But over time, I didn't need anyone to support me anymore. I felt more energy to keep going and was more confident in myself. I could even go to night shifts without fear.

The case manager was very important to help me plan my goals and talk about things that are going on as I did not have anyone. A lot of times I needed support to give me energy to achieve my goals. During this time, it is important to have someone next to you so they can help you if you need anything, for example, with advocacy and life improvement.

The money doesn't help a lot alone; you need someone to help you understand how to manage the money and support with daily things. I think it is better that Salvos Housing did not give me money directly to pay for rent, instead they made my rent less. This was good to learn money management.

During the period of rent support, it helped me to build some savings. It meant I could think about moving into a better place and buying some new things for myself. It gave me more stability to focus on studying and working. I did not have to worry about where I was going to live or how I was going to afford everything.

Before this program, I didn't know much about renting in Australia. I had always lived with my family, so I never managed a lease by myself. My MSTHP case manager explained how real estate works, what to do if there's a problem in the house, who to tell, and how to fix things.

When I look at a lease document now, I can understand it. I know what happens if I break the lease, how to give notice, what all the clauses mean. I feel confident to take the actions I need and I understand my rights.

In the new apartment, everything is familiar now because I've already learned how to live independently. Before, everything was unknown. Now, I have a strong support network if I need help."

*Name changed for privacy reasons.

Program Highlights

6

modern slavery survivors assisted this year



3,452

hours of casework support provided this year



12

survivors have completed the program to achieve independence since launch





Asylum Seekers Support Program

Providing housing assistance and casework support to people seeking asylum, together with the Asylum Seekers Centre and the House of Welcome.

With limited access to government housing support and minimal financial assistance, people seeking asylum in New South Wales face significant challenges in securing safe and affordable housing. High rental costs, discrimination, and lack of rental history further exacerbate the issue, pushing many into overcrowded or unsafe living conditions, couch surfing, or even homelessness. Without secure housing, it becomes even more difficult for people to find employment or focus on visa applications.

Increased access to crisis accommodation, transitional housing, and affordable rental options are essential to ensuring people seeking asylum have the stability they need to rebuild their lives.

Over the past financial year we made significant three-year funding commitments to both the

Asylum Seekers Centre (ASC) and the House of Welcome (HoW).

Since 2014 we have partnered with the ASC to provide housing and wraparound services to its clients. Our new funding agreement helps deliver vital support like rental assistance, access to emergency housing, crisis payments and complex casework for people in vulnerable situations.

Our funding to the HoW supports its Welcome Start Transitional Housing Program, which provides up to 12 months of safe, stable housing; personalised case management; mentoring on tenancy rights; and pathways to both financial and housing independence. People are also helped to access legal, health, education, and employment services, as well as job readiness training and support transitioning into long-term housing.



Program Highlights



Where did people come from?



Real stories of support

Abdul

Abdul* fled persecution and arrived in Australia alone, with no home, job, or support. He found a place to stay in one of the HoW properties in Liverpool, giving him stability to start rebuilding his life. The HoW team helped him complete financial literacy training, enrol in a language course, and secure a stable job. Step by step, he gained the confidence and skills to live independently. Today he has moved into his own home and is pursuing full-time employment.

Fatima

Fatima* was fleeing domestic violence, facing homelessness, and had nowhere to turn. As a single mother seeking asylum, she did not have a safety net. Through the HoW Fatima and her children found a safe place to stay. Casework support helped her access legal advice, connect with community resources, and secure income through the Status Resolution Support Services program. Today, Fatima is thriving. She has moved into private rental housing, is financially independent, and is building a brighter future for her children.

Amani

A medical professional from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Amani* came to Australia for a health conference and sought protection as she could not return to the DRC. After her small amount of savings was exhausted she became homeless. She had limited English, was struggling to understand Sydney's culture and dynamics, and was overwhelmed and distressed. The ASC booked her into a hostel for two weeks' crisis accommodation, which was extended to give her more time to find stable accommodation.

Amani has now received her work rights and is looking for employment, while taking English lessons. She has joined the ASC's Lunch and Learn program, which teaches people the required skills to work in a commercial kitchen and proper food handling. She is looking for somewhere to live with two other French-speaking ASC clients.

Having a safe place to live enabled her to regroup, understand the legal protection process and work towards stabilising her situation in Sydney.

*Names changed for safety reasons.

Transforming Spaces into Shelter

Our new three-year partnership with Women's Community Shelters is providing women and children in crisis the safety, stability, and support they need to rebuild their lives with dignity and confidence.

The Foundation's funding commitment to Women's Community Shelters (WCS) supports direct service delivery, the Housing Innovation Program, and the opening of a brand-new shelter in the Sydney suburb of Liverpool.

A leading innovator in 'meanwhile-use housing', WCS repurposes vacant or underutilised properties into safe, transitional accommodation. Residents are supported with trauma-informed case management and tailored assistance, including access to health professionals, counselling, legal aid, financial assistance, and employment and training opportunities, while working towards securing permanent housing. The program is managed by WCS's Housing Innovation Manager – a role made possible by Foundation funding.

In just six months, 57 women aged 55+ have been supported across three meanwhile-use housing properties, totalling 7,976 bed nights. In May 2025, WCS opened Tingira House in Mount Hutton, its fourth meanwhile-use home, offering accommodation for up to 20 women at a time. Another project is underway in

Glenfield, where a former aged care building is being transformed into transitional housing for older women escaping DV and homelessness.

Through our partnership a total of 554 women and children have been supported across the wider WCS network in the past financial year, which includes shelter stays, transitional housing, social housing, outreach and referrals.

“It feels amazing to be in stable supported accommodation. I'm so thankful. Thank you again. It is freeing when you are stable, it opens your mind up to other things.”

A bedroom and the main common living area at Tingira House. Photos courtesy of Temple & Webster.



Our History

“May we never act contrary to justice and truth – and may we be guided by charity in all our actions and words.”

– Mary Aikenhead

Moved by the plight of the needy in Ireland, in 1815 Mary Aikenhead founded the Sisters of Charity to serve those living in poverty.

The order was unenclosed, to allow the Sisters to walk with the poor and marginalised, offering practical relief and spiritual nourishment.

When Bishop Polding sent a request to Mary Aikenhead asking her to send Sisters to the most neglected portion of the Catholic world, she responded by appointing five volunteer Sisters to Australia. Mother Mary John Cahill, Sister Mary John Baptist De Lacy, Sister Mary Xavier Williams, Sister Mary Lawrence Cater and Sister Mary Francis de Sales O'Brien arrived in Sydney on the last day of 1838.

These heroic and courageous women began their ministry in Australia by assisting the convict women in the female factory at Parramatta. There were few good roads then and so the Sisters walked everywhere, from hospitals and orphanages to schools and gaols.

From these humble beginnings the Sisters of Charity have continued to answer the call to ministry across a wide range of social welfare activities.

In order to continue the mission and traditions of the Sisters of Charity of Australia, specifically to the service of the poor, the Congregational Leader and Council established the Sisters of Charity Foundation in 2000. The Foundation continues to take the history and values of the Sisters forward through our social justice programs.



Compassion. Hope. Practical Assistance.

In the tradition of the Sisters of Charity

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